

CONTESTS: THEIR EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION, USES AND ABUSES^{1/}

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- I. Abbreviated statement of objectives of 4-H Club work. (From N. Y. 4-H Handbook)
1. Ideals and standards of farming, homemaking, community life.
 2. Skills and understanding in fields of agriculture and homemaking.
 3. Understanding and appreciation of nature.
 4. Training in cooperative action.
 5. Healthful living.

II. Contest--what is it? "Earnest struggle for superiority" (Webster).

Granted--desirability of objectives:

No doubt--of desirability of earnest struggle.
No large achievement without it.

Question--superiority to what, to whom?

Here is where abuses may enter.
But contest implies contestants.

III. Educational function of contest.

To stimulate "earnest struggle" in direction of educational objectives.
Basic assumption: Learning comes about only through activity of the learner.

Therefore, to be educationally justifiable, a contest must--
Involve activity resulting in learning in line with objectives,
or, lead to such activity.

Contests merely to determine who has reached highest achievement not educational.

That is, educationally, contests should be used as incentives to earnest struggle.

And therefore, being means to an end-- when not necessary to the end no longer justifiable.

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